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ABSTRACT

The effects on selected student outcomes are evaluated after 2 years of operation of Project RAISE, a multifaceted approach to helping at-risk students featuring outside adults as school-based advocates and one-on-one mentors at seven middle schools in Baltimore (Maryland). Seven community sponsoring groups (churches, universities, businesses, and a social fraternity) each sponsor approximately 60 at-risk youth. Positive effects are found in improved student attendance and report card grades in English, but not in promotion rates or standardized test scores. The effects, although sizable, are not sufficient to neutralize the academic risks with which students enter the program. The positive results are primarily attributed to three of the seven sites. Some evidence supports interpretations that although strong one-on-one mentoring is not an essential component of an effective program that uses outside adults to assist at-risk middle school students, the RAISE model is much more likely to show positive results when one-on-one monitoring is strongly implemented. Success may also depend on the size and composition of the student group to be served. Issues are raised about roles and responsibilities of adult advocates or mentors. Three tables of statistical data and 10 references are included.
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Using Community Adults as Advocates Or Mentors for At-Risk Middle School Students: A Two-Year Evaluation Of Project RAISE

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**Using Community Adults as Advocates or Mentors
For At-Risk Middle School Students:
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The Center

The mission of the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students (CDS) is to significantly improve the education of disadvantaged students at each level of schooling through new knowledge and practices produced by thorough scientific study and evaluation. The Center conducts its research in four program areas: The Early and Elementary Education Program, The Middle Grades and High Schools Program, the Language Minority Program, and the School, Family, and Community Connections Program.

The Early and Elementary Education Program

This program is working to develop, evaluate, and disseminate instructional programs capable of bringing disadvantaged students to high levels of achievement, particularly in the fundamental areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The goal is to expand the range of effective alternatives which schools may use under Chapter 1 and other compensatory education funding and to study issues of direct relevance to federal, state, and local policy on education of disadvantaged students.

The Middle Grades and High Schools Program

This program is conducting research syntheses, survey analyses, and field studies in middle and high schools. The three types of projects move from basic research to useful practice. Syntheses compile and analyze existing knowledge about effective education of disadvantaged students. Survey analyses identify and describe current programs, practices, and trends in middle and high schools, and allow studies of their effects. Field studies are conducted in collaboration with school staffs to develop and evaluate effective programs and practices.

The Language Minority Program

This program represents a collaborative effort. The University of California at Santa Barbara is focusing on the education of Mexican-American students in California and Texas; studies of dropout among children of recent immigrants are being conducted in San Diego and Miami by Johns Hopkins, and evaluations of learning strategies in schools serving Navajo, Cherokee, and Lumbee Indians are being conducted by the University of Northern Arizona. The goal of the program is to identify, develop, and evaluate effective programs for disadvantaged Hispanic, American Indian, Southeast Asian, and other language minority children.

The School, Family, and Community Connections Program

This program is focusing on the key connections between schools and families and between schools and communities to build better educational programs for disadvantaged children and youth. Initial work is seeking to provide a research base concerning the most effective ways for schools to interact with and assist parents of disadvantaged students and interact with the community to produce effective community involvement.

Abstract

The effects on selected student outcomes are evaluated after two years of operation of Project RAISE, a multifaceted approach featuring outside adults as school-based advocates and one-on-one mentors for at-risk students at seven middle schools. Positive effects are found on improving student attendance and report card grades in English, but not on promotion rates or standardized test scores. The effects though sizeable were not sufficient to neutralize the academic risks with which students entered the program. The positive results were primarily due to three of the seven sites. Some evidence supported interpretations that although strong one-on-one mentoring is not an *essential* component of an effective program that uses outside adults to assist at risk middle school students, the RAISE model is much more likely to show positive effects when one-on-one mentoring *has* been strongly implemented. Success may also depend on the size and composition of the student group to be served. Issues are raised about roles and responsibilities of adult advocates or mentors.

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Introduction

Schools throughout the nation are engaged in programs that use adults from the community to help at-risk youth make steady progress through the middle and secondary grades and complete high school. Two general approaches -- mentoring and advocacy -- are widely viewed as promising mechanisms to provide sustained, goal-directed support to students.

Mentoring is commonly defined as a one-to-one relationship between a caring adult and a student who needs support to achieve academic, career, social or personal goals. Mentor-student relationships can develop naturally or within structured interventions through activities designed to arrange, sustain, and monitor matches. Advocacy, as the term is currently applied, refers to a supportive relationship wherein a resourceful adult (who may be called an advocate, program coordinator, youth worker, counselor) works with the same group of students over a specified period of time and provides intensive instrumental, material, and emotional support that can include assessing students' needs for academic and social services, intervening on the students' behalf in schools and other institutions, monitoring students' participation in programs, and identifying and brokering formal services.

Both of these approaches are extremely popular, not only for "at-risk" youth but for other populations as well. For example, a directory compiled by the New York State Mentoring Committee (1989) lists over 211 mentoring programs in New York state alone. A recent survey of college and university tutoring and mentoring programs for disadvantaged youth (U.S. Department of Education, 1990) reported that, of an estimated 1,701 such programs, 63 percent provided mentoring and 17 percent had mentoring as the primary focus.

National mobilizations are underway to promote the use of these mentoring and advocacy approaches. For example, a growing number of activities under the "I Have a Dream" Foundation are being carried out. As of October 1989, the program was underway in over 30 cities in 23 states (Berger, 1989; J.M. Sesnick, personal communication, December 6, 1989). Another major effort is One to One, which has the goal of matching with a "caring partner" every young person who can benefit from such a relationship.

This is to be accomplished through the formation of local leadership councils, pilot neighborhood projects and the National Mentoring Partnership (One to One, 1990). Big Brothers/Big Sisters of American has a long history of providing young people with adult volunteers in one to one relationships. The organization has nearly 500 affiliates throughout the nation and the children it serves include a large proportion from low-income or single-parent families (Smink, 1990).

The widespread use of terms such as mentoring and advocacy and the prominence in the media of testimonials about how kids have been "turned around" through contact with a mentor or advocate give the impression that these are well-defined approaches that effectively increase students' motivation and achievement in school, remove barriers to student progress in school and in the wider community, and help students refrain from self-destructive and illegal actions. In fact, there is great overlap in the practices that bear these labels, and the labels themselves may be used interchangeably. The content of adult roles and relationships with students, as well as the desired outcome, vary considerably from program to program (see Flaxman, Asher, & Harrington, 1988 for a review).

Within programs, the intensity of relationships may also vary. Freedman (1988) examined the quality of mentoring relationships in five programs that provided at-risk youth with "elder mentors." Three types of one-to-one relationships were observed: primary relationships, which were characterized by a high degree of attachment, trust, importance and enjoyment; secondary relationships, which exhibited the same characteristics as those found in primary relationships, but in a less developed form; and non-significant relationships, pairings which were marked by distrust and distance.

Research on the effects of mentoring is scant. The available information suggests that mentoring can be a useful but *modest* approach for addressing students' needs. According to Flaxman and Associates' (1988) review of the literature, the goals for the relationship should be clear and within the mentor's power to achieve; and the mentor must be empathic, able to assess accurately the needs of students and able to apply resources appropriately and regularly.

Research on the effectiveness of advocacy is also rare; the few studies that exist (see for examples, Murray et al., 1981 and Unger & Wandersman, 1985) again suggest that this form of support works best when the adult role is structured around a few well-defined objectives that will in turn help the student to undertake specific actions.

However, few existing projects have been accompanied by quantitative evaluations that include carefully constructed comparison groups, statistical controls on initial student input differ-

ences, and statistical tests of effects on major student outcomes after a reasonable period of program operations (Flaxman, Ascher and Harrington, 1988; Smink, 1990). To provide an empirical foundation for a discussion of programs that use adults from the community to assist the school success of at-risk youth, this report shows the results after two years of Project RAISE, a well-financed multi-faceted program pursued by seven different community sponsors within the large urban school district of Baltimore, Maryland.

RAISE Project Components and Samples

RAISE started in May 1988 with seven community sponsors who each made a seven-year commitment to provide support to groups of approximately 60 at-risk students, beginning from the time they enter grade six and following them through subsequent middle and high school grades. The sponsors include two churches (one predominantly black and one predominantly white), two universities (one predominantly black and one predominantly white), two large businesses (both predominantly white), and one fraternity (predominantly black). According to project materials, "the basic RAISE strategy is to create on a large scale the kind of sustained caring connections which can make a dramatic difference in the lives of very high risk children." RAISE expects to improve students' self-esteem and school-related behavior and progress, and to reduce high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse and teen-age pregnancies.

Key components of the RAISE model include a full-time director and support staff who provide overall program development and administration for the set of seven sponsors; paid school-based advocates for each of the seven sponsors; and volunteer one-on-one mentors for each student served by the sponsors. The director and support staff are located at the Baltimore Mentoring Institute, a non profit agency created to manage a number of related activities in the city.

RAISE is funded by significant grants from two major local foundations and by annual contributions from the seven sponsoring organizations that together will total more than \$2.0 million over the seven-year project period. The RAISE combination of paid and volunteer components is intended to be at levels that could be widely replicated elsewhere if the project is proven successful.

The seven sponsors vary significantly in the degree to which they have implemented the RAISE model during the first two years of the project, which are summarized in Table 1. The seven paid school-based advocates have worked from the outset with each sponsoring organization, to serve RAISE students as "part counselor, part friend, and role model." The advocates' job includes monitoring attendance, grades and behavior, building a relationship of trust with each student, and trouble shooting for individual students when necessary. All sponsors have recruited some volunteers to assist the advocates with after-school activities such as tutoring and recreation and with periodic events such as museum or zoo visits, attending athletic events, roller skating, or going to the movies. However, not all sponsors have established the one-to-one mentoring component of the RAISE model.

One-on-one mentoring is a particularly demanding component of RAISE that few of the sponsors have as yet been able to establish at a high level of implementation. The expected mentoring relationship with an individual student is one of sustained caring and attention by the adult volunteer. Although mentors may help with a student's academic or personal problems, the expected role is different from a tutor, professional counselor, or social worker (Flaxman, Ascher and Harrington, 1988). To achieve a strong supportive mentoring relationship that builds students' trust and provides effective role models for positive personal development by the students, RAISE expects a strong commitment of time and energy from the adult volunteers. The mentors must commit at least one year of weekly contacts that include bi-weekly face-to-face meetings. Mentors are provided with orientation and ongoing

training by RAISE staff and are given regular information by the paid advocate about their students' program and performance in school and elsewhere (RAISE, 1990).

One-on-one mentoring for each RAISE student has been well established by two sponsors (indicated by +++ in Table 1), although one of these two took until the beginning of the second year of the project to achieve its high level of implementation. Three other RAISE sponsors have established one-on-one mentoring for some but not all student participants, ranging from matching about half of the students with mentors in one case (++), having mentors for about one-third of students for the past half year in another case (+), and reaching less than ten students with active mentors in the third situation (+). Two sponsors do not have one-on-one mentors for any RAISE students but use their adult volunteers to assist with group activities or to work with different individual students on different occasions.

Another important way that some sponsors have deviated from the original RAISE design involves changes in the samples of students to be served. The original seven groups of students were identified for each sponsor by designating seven elementary schools in some of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods from which the students completing grade 5 in May 1988 would be eligible for RAISE. The initial design was for each sponsor to work with a group of about 60 students, which was thought to be an upper limit case load for each school-based advocate and for sponsors to recruit and train volunteer mentors. However, the number of students eligible for RAISE from the designated feeder schools was often much greater than 60, and the sponsors coped with this greater number in different ways. Three sponsors accepted all the eligible students, even though their actual numbers of RAISE participants then ranged from 75 to 80. One sponsor who should have served 75 eligible students wound up with an actual RAISE sample of 67 due to apparent clerical errors in providing

school lists, but no apparent biases were created by the sample reduction. Three other sponsors purposely eliminated about one-third of the students from their pools of eligible students (indicated by √ in Table 1). Their original samples had ranged in size from 85 to 99, but subsamples were selected to achieve in each case a final group of about 60 students as actual RAISE participants. The process of selection in these three cases was not random, but based on which students showed most initial interest in the project, as reflected in two cases by providing home information of interest and in the third case by being active in the early months of the project. Our tabulations show that the eligible students who were eliminated by these three sponsors tended to have lower fifth-grade test scores and higher absence rates, and were more likely to be male and to be designated as Special Education students. This non-random elimination of some eligible students introduces some complications to the original evaluation design.

The final actual samples for each sponsor differed in two other important ways, that derived from initial differences of students and their elementary feeder schools. Average student grade 5 reading scores differ by sponsor at the end of the school year when students first were selected for RAISE, with a difference of nearly one and one-half years in grade-level equivalent scores between the sponsors with the least well and best prepared students (D vs. F). Sponsors also differed in the degree to which their 60 students were dispersed across different middle schools, because of elementary school feeder patterns. Table 1 shows the number of students in the "core" middle school that included the largest number of students for each sponsor. Students in core schools should be easiest to serve because of their location at the site where the full time paid advocates reside for each sponsor.

Each factor may have some influence on the effectiveness of each sponsor's RAISE programs over the first two years, which we will evaluate along a number of student outcome dimensions.

Evaluation of RAISE Effects

Because of the circumstances under which some RAISE sponsors eliminated students from the original pool of eligible participants, we adopted the following strategies to establish comparison points to evaluate possible effects of RAISE on student outcomes. First, we restricted our attention to comparisons between RAISE and Non-RAISE students who are attending the same

middle school, leaving the students who had been dropped by RAISE sponsors out of both comparison groups. Since each sponsor has a core middle school where most of their RAISE participants attend and where the paid full-time staff advocates are located, we focus on RAISE students who are most likely to receive the strongest assistance from the program. By

omitting from the analyses all students who had been dropped from RAISE, we do not penalize the Non-RAISE comparison groups with any potential negative bias of the individuals eliminated from RAISE. Thus, we are using students who began grade six at the same time in the same core middle schools to compare RAISE participants with other students who were not eligible for RAISE because their elementary feeder schools were not originally selected.

Second, we statistically control on a number of key student input variables with which students entered grade 6. These variables include grade 5 Spring scores on standardized tests in reading, math, and language arts; student's sex and race; and student's age in grade 5, which indirectly indicates whether an individual had been left back one or more times in elementary school. Statistical controls are achieved through multiple regression analyses on selected student outcomes that include these input variables as well as a zero-one code for whether a student is enrolled in RAISE.

Our strategy to restrict attention to students in core middle schools will also hold constant many features of school policy and staffing not associated with RAISE, because RAISE and Non-Raise students in the same schools will have similar school programs outside of RAISE. This initial strategy also aids in controlling on student inputs, because each core middle school draws from a defined geographic attendance area. All of our approaches, however, cannot completely discount possible bias in the analyses due to some RAISE sponsors' elimination of some student participants from the original eligible pool; thus we will also note any residual relationships with sponsor's selection practices.

Program Effects

Four sets of student outcomes are examined for possible effects of student participation in RAISE. Absence rate for 1989-90 (the second year of the RAISE Project) is calculated by dividing the number of days absent by the number of days on roll for each individual student.

To avoid problems sometimes associated with extreme values on ratio scales, we eliminated students who either (a) missed more than 135 days of the 180 day school year or (b) were on roll for less than 45 days. This truncation also obviates problems due to schools who may retain names on the roll that likely have left the district,

in order to gain an enrollment advantage for staffing calculations. We repeated all analyses using untruncated absence rates and observed no substantial changes in reported results.

Report card averages are calculated by averaging scores from the four quarterly marking periods of the 1989-90 school year, to establish English grades and overall Grade Point Average. On-grade promotion rates are calculated on whether an individual student had been promoted at the end of grade 6 and at the end of grade 7. Student test score performance is measured by grade-equivalent scores on the California Achievement Tests (CAT) administered by the district to all students not in special education at the end of the Spring 1990 term.

Table 2 summarizes the results of the overall RAISE Project, combining the seven sponsors in a comparison of RAISE and Non-Raise students attending the same core middle schools with statistical controls on student inputs. Several statistics are provided for assessing the size and direction of possible RAISE effects. B is the unstandardized regression coefficient for an individual student's enrollment in RAISE, produced by the multiple regression analyses that also include the student input measures. B is thus an estimate of the difference in a selected student outcome due to participation in RAISE in a core middle school, controlling on student input differences. ES is our estimated "effect size," similar to the statistic often used in experimental studies and meta-analyses, calculated as the difference between RAISE and Non-RAISE students (given by B) divided by the district standard deviation on the relevant outcome measure. The benchmark of .20 or greater for ES significance often used in educational research gives one standard for our assessments. We also provide a test of statistical significance for B, together with the probability (α) that the observed difference is due to chance. To help us judge how much RAISE effects reduce the actual risk level of students compared to a district standard, Table 2 also presents the current mean on each outcome for RAISE students and for other students in the entire district who began grade six at the same time.

Table 2 gives evidence of both the potential and limitations of RAISE as it has been implemented in the first two years. We observe statistically significant positive effects on two outcomes -- absence rates and report card grades. And although the positive effects are meaningful, the average RAISE student still has remaining

attendance and grade performance problems that pose major risk factors for continued success in school and for completing high school without dropping out.

The effect on student absence rates is shown in the first row of Table 2. The reduction due to RAISE participation in annual absences of nearly three percent ($B = -2.96$) approaches the Effect Size that most analysts take seriously ($ES = -.18$) and attains a high level of statistical significance ($\alpha = .002$). When translated into the number of extra days of attendance in a 180-day school year, the estimated effect is that RAISE students will attend about one more week than comparable Non-Raise students in the same middle schools ($2.96\% \times 180 = 5.3$ additional days). While this increment in attendance is meaningful, Table 2 shows it still leaves the average RAISE student with an annual absence rate of 18.38 percent, which is worse than the district average of 16.77 for students at this grade and remains a troublesome risk factor for success in later grades. Thus, our results indicate that RAISE taken as a whole has potential for improving student attendance, but the effects are not yet powerful enough to reduce the average absences to desirable rates. Since RAISE is not intended to upgrade the quality of schools where the students receive their classroom instruction, it remains to be seen whether RAISE alone can produce much greater gains in attendance and school performance.

The second and third rows of Table 2 present findings of RAISE impacts on report card grades. Students enrolled in RAISE are getting better grades than other students in the same schools after controlling on student inputs, but these grades still remain below the district average. The positive RAISE effect is statistically significant for English grades but not for math grades. The positive RAISE effect for overall grade point average is in-between the values for English and Math and just misses achieving a minimum significance level of .10 (see table). But in terms of the Effect Size statistic, the RAISE effects are not large by conventional standards. Table 2 also shows that even after the positive effects, the average RAISE student remains below district mean report card marks and close to the minimum passing grade of 70. Thus, participation in RAISE is shown to help students get better grades in English and perhaps in their overall grade point average than comparable students in the same middle schools, but the impact is not strong enough to move the

average RAISE student to a high level of classroom performance.

The final three rows of Table 2 present results for student promotion rates and student achievement on standardized tests of reading and mathematics. We find no statistically significant differences between RAISE and Non-RAISE students on any of these outcomes. However, the average RAISE student remains well below the district average on these outcomes and at levels that raise concerns about the chances of success in later grades, especially with regard to low middle grade promotion rates, which are often precursors of dropping out at later grades. Table 2 shows that only about two-thirds of RAISE students have been promoted in each of the last two years, compared to about three-quarters of students district-wide who began grade 6 at the same time (.662 vs. .759). So, even though RAISE has had some positive impacts on student attendance and grades, one of every three RAISE students was retained in grade at least once since the program began two years ago. Grade retention in elementary and middle grades has been shown to be a strong predictor of not completing high school (Sheppard and Smith, 1989), so many RAISE students remain in a high risk category for dropping out before high school graduation.

Sponsor Effects

A comparison of the seven different sponsors of RAISE programs is useful for further judgments on the potential and limitations of the first two years of operation. We can examine whether and how the range of impacts across sponsors is related to known variations in the implementation of RAISE components or in the students served by each sponsor.

Table 3 summarizes the results for each individual RAISE sponsor on student absence rates and English grades, the two outcomes where the overall positive impact of RAISE was most evident. Although the estimated sizes of effects are often much larger and more impressive in individual cases than the overall sizes reported in Table 2, only three of seven sponsors report desirable effects that reach statistical significance on either of these two outcomes.

Sponsor C shows the largest differences between RAISE and Non-Raise students on both absence rates and English grades. In this case, the reduction in absence rates of 7.51 percent translates into 13 more days in school attendance,

or over 2 weeks of added schooling for RAISE participants. The improvement in English grades is over 2 points on average for the RAISE students served by Sponsor C, which is statistically significant with a very low probability of error. Sponsor E also shows sizable and statistically significant effects due to RAISE on both outcomes, though not quite as impressive as the results for Sponsor C. For sponsor F, the estimated effects of RAISE are both in the desired direction, but only the result on English grades reaches an acceptable level of statistical significance. Thus, the overall positive effects observed for the combined sample of all RAISE sponsors was primarily produced by three sponsors who produced especially powerful desirable impacts on their RAISE participants.

RAISE Components and Effects

Examining additional information about each sponsor's own RAISE program, we can find several possible explanations for why some RAISE sponsors show stronger positive results. Table 1, shown earlier, provides information for each sponsor on the degree to which one-on-one mentoring has been instituted (as an indicator of program implementation), grade reading level of the average RAISE student (as a measure of student input), the number of RAISE students being served in the core middle school (as an indicator of the size and dispersion of student participants), and which sponsors eliminated students non-randomly from the program.

The use of one-on-one mentoring is not a consistent predictor of which RAISE sponsors produce the strongest positive results, although the set of three most effective RAISE sites includes two of the three sponsors with well-established mentoring components. Sponsors E and F are rated high on the implementation of mentoring and showed significant desirable impacts on their RAISE students. At the same time, the other effective sponsor (C) has the largest estimated RAISE impacts but did not use one-on-one mentoring at all. Clearly, other aspects of Sponsor C's approach -- such as the school-based advocate and the various activities between volunteer adults and RAISE students -- were powerful enough to produce the observed benefits in student attendance and grades. Moreover, one sponsor (G) with a well-established mentoring component did not reflect significant average impacts in our analyses of differences between relevant RAISE and NON-RAISE students. But sponsor G is a special situation among RAISE sites, in that students did

not shift from an elementary school setting to a middle school environment until grade 7, which might explain difficulties in this case of producing RAISE effects at the end of year 2. The other three sponsors that failed to show consistent significant effects on student outcomes in our analyses did not have strong mentoring components, pairing only a very small number of individual students with mentors (Sponsor A and D) or having no one-on-one mentoring for any students (Sponsor B). Thus, although we find one sponsor-exception with strong effects and no mentors and one sponsor-exception with well-established mentors and no consistent effects, the results for the remaining five sponsors support a conclusion that one-on-one mentoring is an important RAISE component -- three with weak mentoring showed no effects and two with strong mentoring showed significant positive effects. It seems reasonable to conclude that although strong one-on-one mentoring is not an essential component of an effective program that uses outside adults to assist at-risk middle school students, the RAISE model is much more likely to show positive effects when one-on-one mentoring has been strongly implemented.

Other aspects of RAISE implementation also remain as possible explanations for differential sponsor effectiveness, including the reading scores with which students enter the programs of the different sponsors and the reduction of the numbers of students to be served by certain sponsors. The association of student input differences with sponsor effectiveness is only suggestive, using the grade 5 reading scores and core sizes shown in Table 3 as points of comparison. The two sponsors with the lowest average student input reading scores and with the largest number of students to be served in the core school (A and D) are also the two that show no consistent effects across any of the outcomes we examined and whose students remain most at risk in their further schooling. But, except for these two least effective sites, there is no other pattern between student inputs and sponsor effectiveness.

Table 1 also shows that the three most effective sponsors had selected a non-random sample of actual RAISE participants from the original pool of eligible students. Although we cannot completely rule out the possibility that these positive results were thus due to sample selectivity rather than actual RAISE program impacts, additional analyses support a more general interpretation -- RAISE effects are more likely for sponsors who serve at-risk students that

have less severe initial educational disadvantages. When we repeated the analyses shown in Tables 2 and 3 on the original samples, which included all eligible students as RAISE participants, we found similar results. Adding all eligible students to the analysis did not substantially alter the effects of RAISE even though only some of them participated in the programs of three sponsors. As might be expected, the results were slightly smaller in size in these reanalyses, but these effects remained statistically significant in the same patterns as reported in Tables 2 and 3.

Further Implications for Research and Practice

This evaluation is one of the first that uses comparison groups and statistical tests to judge the effects of a well-financed program using adult advocates or mentors. It provides some additional new perspectives on major practical and research questions.

Both the potential and limitations of programs such as RAISE emerge from the evaluation results after two years of operations. We find it is possible to help students make impressive gains in school attendance and in report card marks, but the average gains after two years are not sufficient to eliminate the academic risks with which students entered the program. Even after the RAISE benefits, the average student continued to have serious problems of absenteeism and low grades compared to the typical student in the district. And RAISE has not yet had measurable positive impacts on student standardized test scores or promotion rates in the middle grades. Nevertheless, the student behaviors where RAISE has been successful in its first two years can be viewed as steps in a sequence to improve students' academic chances as the program continues.

School attendance, on which RAISE demonstrated positive impact, is a behavior that is most open to short term improvements and that can lead to advances in other school outcomes. Good attendance may be more completely under the control of individual students and more susceptible to positive influences by adult advocates or mentors than other school behaviors. In contrast to report card grades and promotion rates, for which teachers make the major decisions, every student can have good attendance. To be sure, some teachers can induce better student attendance through more engaging lessons and more positive relations with students. But any student with absenteeism problems can

Some practical implications are suggested when we combine our conclusion that sponsors who reduced their original samples had the largest non-spurious RAISE impacts with our previous observation that the two sponsors who began with the largest and most disadvantaged student groups showed no effects. It appears that the size and composition of student groups to be served require major differences in resources if programs such as RAISE are to be successful. Programs that begin with student groups that are very large or greatly behind academically will have a much greater struggle to demonstrate positive effects.

improve daily attendance with extra effort and effective support from family and meaningful adults. Effective encouragement by mentors or advocates to improve student attendance may require less training and program management than other support activities such as academic tutoring or negotiating with teachers or school officials on behalf of students. Thus, attendance rates seem to be a student outcome on which adult mentor and advocacy programs can focus to be effective in the short run.

Good school attendance can often be a building block to other student behaviors required for school success. Student attendance rates are often closely tied to their school report card grades, because many teachers will mark down students who have higher absenteeism levels than the rest of the class and some teachers will automatically fail students who have missed a significant portion of the term. Course failures due to poor attendance can lead to higher retention rates. Student learning as measured by standardized test scores can also be expected to suffer as a result of poor attendance, because absent students will miss instruction and engage in less drill and practice in the basic skills covered by tests. So a program of assistance by outside adults that focuses on improving student attendance may have a cumulative effect over time on other academic outcomes.

Our findings that RAISE impacts report card grades may be partially explained by the improvements in attendance that may lead to better grades. We found strong RAISE effects only for English grades, so it is likely that direct support for academic learning by RAISE adult advocates and volunteers was also responsible, through activities such as assistance with completing homework, tutoring in basic skill areas, or assistance in learning activities such as

reading practice. More effective assistance with academic learning may require more specialized training of RAISE adults or more coordination with the ongoing school instructional program, but our evaluation of RAISE suggests that direct academic activities can be a successful early part of programs using outside adult advocates or mentors.

Major issues also emerge from our evaluation of RAISE about the successful implementation and coordination of program components. Programs that seek to make one-on-one mentoring a key component face several issues. Recruiting mentors and having them sustain successful relationships with at-risk students has been a major challenge for most RAISE sponsors. Some sponsoring organizations (such as the two participating churches) were able from the beginning to locate sufficient numbers of adults who committed to the mentor role and responsibilities. But most sponsors have taken more time to establish mentoring activities and are still working to recruit an individual mentor for every RAISE student.

In some cases, sponsors have followed a process in which sets of adult volunteers engage in group activities with groups of RAISE students to assist in identifying one-on-one pairs that seem to be good matches for a sustained positive relationship. But when the requirements for mentors require major and regular commitments of time and energy, it will often take a long time before a sponsoring organization can build a cadre of committed mentors. During this time, other useful activities using adult volunteers in less demanding roles can be established by sponsors as part of their process of establishing and supplementing an effective mentoring component.

The mentor's role is usually described as being a caring adult to support the mentee's efforts to succeed at major goals, but this conception raises questions of implementation and coordination

with paid adult advocates in the program and with other adults in the student's school and home. Mentors are usually not expected to assume the supervisory and disciplinary roles of parents and teachers, but to provide a positive uncriticizing reference in the student's life. Yet some of the student behaviors that appear most responsive to influence by outside adults, such as improved school attendance, may require adult monitoring and pressure that goes beyond the theoretical role of mentors or beyond the understandable preferences of some adults who actually fill these roles to avoid possible confrontations with their mentees. This raises the question of whether others -- such as the paid adult advocate -- might better handle the supervisory and disciplinary activities while mentors continue to focus on positive supports and incentives in their relationships with individual students, or whether both the definition and training of mentors should address the needs for both adult support and constructive criticism.

Further evaluations of RAISE or other programs with similar components and goals are needed to learn whether effects become stronger as a program continues beyond its formative years and whether certain students respond better and benefit more from adult advocates or mentors as they move through the middle and secondary grades. RAISE managers are using our evaluation of the project's first two years to intensify and focus their efforts for the future. They expect one-on-one mentoring to gradually become available for most student participants in all but one sponsoring organization, and they intend to concentrate more on improving student school attendance and on working out arrangements with school officials to minimize retentions. Closer attention will be paid by both RAISE practitioners and evaluators to which students participate most in each type of RAISE activities to learn about individual differences in student responsiveness to RAISE offerings and to identify the RAISE components and activities that have most impact on particular student outcomes.

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TABLE 1
Differences in RAISE Components by Sponsor

RAISE Components					
Sponsor	Advocate	Mentors	Subsample Selection	Grade 5 Reading	Core Size
A	√	+		4.78	56
B	√	0		5.38	41
C	√	0	√	5.18	44
D	√	+		4.29	57
E	√	++	√	4.89	49
F	√	+++	√	5.73	43
G	√	+++		5.20	44

TABLE 2
Comparison of RAISE and Non-RAISE Students in the
Same Core Middle Schools on Selected Outcomes, with
Controls on Student Inputs¹

Outcome	B	ES	t	α	RAISE Mean (n)	District Mean (n)
Absence Rate 1989- 90	-2.96	-.18	-3.04	.002 ***	18.38 (311)	16.77 (7099)
Average English Grade 1989-90	1.00	.14	2.36	.019 **	71.72 (277)	73.05 (6011)
Average Math Grade 1989-90	0.33	.04	0.62	.539	69.16 (261)	72.55 (5845)
Grade Point Average 1989-90	0.65	.09	1.60	.109 (*)	71.74 (274)	73.31 (6982)
On-Grade Promotion 1988-90	.007	.02	0.23	.816	.662 (314)	.759 (7292)
Reading CAT GE 1990	-.087	-.04	-0.09	.929	6.30 (264)	7.24 (5817)
Math CAT GE 1990	-.127	-.06	-1.35	.176	7.01 (255)	7.72 (5723)

¹a Controls = Sex, race, age at grade 5, special education designation, grade 5 CAT scores in reading, math and language. Analyses of Absence Rate 1989-90 adds control on Absence Rate in grade 5.

TABLE 3

Comparisons of 1989-90 Absence Rates and Average English Grades of RAISE and Non-RAISE students in the Same Core Middle School, By Sponsor, with Controls on Student Inputs

Sponsor	Absence Rate				Average English Grade			
	B	ES	t	α	B	ES	t	α
A	1.46	.09	0.54	.592	1.88	.26	1.58	.115
B	1.30	.08	0.40	.687	-1.19	-.16	-0.83	.409
C	-7.51	-.45	7.51	.004***	2.66	.37	2.40	.017**
D	-3.87	-.23	-1.36	.177	-1.07	-.15	1.68	.387
E	-4.84	-.29	-1.69	.094*	1.95	.27	1.68	.095*
F	-0.78	-.05	-0.30	.761	2.64	.37	2.34	.020**
G	-0.60	-.04	-0.15	.883	-0.62	-.08	-0.36	.722